

BEYOND TODAY

The British Isles Supplement

October 2026 – January 2027

Promises we hope to receive

God has declared that those who imitate Jesus will become His sons and daughters and Christ's brothers and sisters. This is a good reason to clean up our lives and our minds.

Bible commentaries have noted that the New Testament city of Corinth was notorious for its flagrant promiscuity. Historian Peter Walker explains, “Since classical times people had coined the verb ‘to Corinthianise’ as a way of referring to fornication – such was the city’s reputation for sexual immorality” (*In the Steps of Saint Paul*, page 122).

Having moved on after a stay of 18 months, the apostle Paul maintained his contact with the Church of God in Corinth. He may have written up to five letters to them, although only two survive in the New Testament canon. In the second of these, Paul wrote: “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1). Paul, with personal feeling, encouraged the Church to produce perfect holiness of the flesh and spirit, even as they lived in that unholy environment.

What are “these promises,” and why should they have driven the Corinthians, and, by extension, drive us to focus on the need to seek holiness.

Assurances from God

A precondition and its related promises are found in the preceding chapter, where Paul wrote: “And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what

is unclean and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you and you shall be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:16-18).

“Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you” (2 Corinthians 6:17)

These promises of eternal life in the very Family of God were conditional upon the congregation’s willingness to be separate from the ungodly behaviours of those around them.

Sins of the flesh

To become separate and to continue that way, one has to remain constantly on guard. The book of Job records: “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil” (Job 1:1). Job knew God was watching and declared: “I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?” (Job 31:1). Long before Christ spoke the words of the Sermon on the Mount, Job knew that “whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). Jesus applied this same reasoning to murder (Matthew 5:21-22).

This refers to actions that would be characterised as filthiness of the flesh, but Paul goes further than that to the Corinthians. He directly includes filthiness of the

mind – what goes on inside an individual's head.

Clean up our minds

Proverbs 23:7 states, “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.” What goes on in people's minds defines the kind of people they are. Unchecked wrong thoughts invariably produce wrong actions – sin.

The apostle Peter encouraged a change of mind, from lust to purity. “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:13-16).

Likewise Paul wrote to the Philippians, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). He encouraged believers to present their bodies a living sacrifice and be transformed by the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:1-3). These instructions still apply.

Cleansing our mind and spirit

From the content of Paul's letters to Corinth, we can deduce that he was up against elements of envy and self-righteousness, bitterness, and a spirit of unforgiveness and retaliation. They felt that Paul had wronged them (2 Corinthians 7:2). He hadn't, as he was at pains to point

out. They had been wrongly influenced, but it was in their heads, in their minds.

The New Testament highlights our ongoing need to root out inappropriate ideas, attitudes and behaviours, replacing them with thoughts and actions pleasing to God. This is particularly needful as we approach the “end times” when Christ prophesied that lawlessness would abound and the love of many would grow cold (Matthew 24:12).

The apostle Paul warned that at this time evil men would get worse and gave the young minister Timothy a list of evil deeds that would be prevalent (2 Timothy 3:1-5). The book of Revelation concurs, listing idol worship, murders, sorceries (marginal references often mention “drugs,” especially mind-altering substances), sexual immorality and thefts (Revelation 9:20-21).

Whilst there is a time to focus on rooting out wrong actions, we must not overlook the life inside our heads where envy, pride, jealousy, bitterness, and an unforgiving spirit may have free reign.

What goes on in our minds is important to God. It influences our actions and could prevent us from becoming holy and thereby missing out on the wonderful promise of eternal life in God's family. To study this topic further please request or download *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion* and *Why Were You Born?*

David Fenney

Wonders of Creation

Where did the amazing diversity of life and lifeforms originate?

A substitute chemistry teacher arrived at my daughter's school at the start of 2026. Over the first month or two he used nearly every other lesson to push his atheistic beliefs onto the class, insisting that as a chemistry teacher he only dealt with provable evidence for the existence of all life. He was adamant that God's existence could not be proven.

According to evolution there was a continuous process of change by which all living things on earth originated from shared ancestors over 3.8 billion years ago. Driven supposedly by natural selection and genetic mutations, this explains the spectacular diversity of life from single-celled organisms to complex modern humans. Evolution claims life began in the oceans as microscopic single-celled organisms and that over billions of years these cells supposedly evolved mechanisms to use energy and reproduce. Around 1.7 billion years ago cells began co-operating to form multi-celled life forms.

There are a lot of suppositions in this theory, with little explanation. How did life emerge from dead matter? How did the cells know to “co-operate” with others? How did they organise themselves into a brain, an ear, or an eye? Why would they have envisaged the need to develop reproductive systems?

Science accepts a lot of things, claiming they can happen over time. In numerous short videos I have watched on this subject it is quite amazing to me that the narrators just state that cells started to form. They provide no proof. Yet even single-cell life forms are extremely complex.

It is often said in religious circles that it takes more faith to believe in evolution than in the Creator God. Does it even matter which is true? To study this topic and its implications more deeply please request or download our study aid *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?*

David Riddell

Contradiction? Maybe not!

Addressing God in prayer, our Saviour Jesus Christ stated, “Your word is truth” (John 17:17). There are no exceptions, but sometimes there may be a shortfall in understanding.

Someone told me recently that Jesus turned bread into fish. A sad example of how awareness of biblical events is diminishing. Detractors of the Bible point to various scriptures that appear to be contradictions. Yet even without malicious intent in the course of our studies we may discover verses that appear to be at odds with each other. How can we explain this?

Take, for example, Proverbs 26:4-5 which reads: “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.” A casual reading might lead us to the conclusion that these verses are contradictory – how could we answer a fool and not answer a fool. That assumption, however, would be erroneous.

There is no contradiction between these verses. Both statements are valid. These verses actually represent a common form of parallelism found in the Old Testament, where one idea builds upon another, often by contrasting them.

The context here in verses 1-12 is fools and foolish behaviour. In each verse the word “fool” is the same Hebrew word. *Strong’s Concordance* gives the meaning “fat, that is, (figuratively) stupid or silly”. Given it’s the same word in each verse there is no translation issue.

Verse 4 states: “Do not answer a fool according to his foolishness.” Why not? The rest of the verse explains: “Lest you also be like him.” That last part is key.

An old saying wisely states: “Arguing with a fool only proves there are two fools.” *The Pulpit Commentary* explains this verse a little further: “Do not lower yourself to the fool’s level by answering his silly questions or arguing with him as if he were a sensible man, lest you also be like him, led to utter folly yourself or worse to side with him in his opinions and practices.”

What a fool is

It is important to know what a fool is and why we should not be like one. The *American Tract Society Bible Dictionary* defines a fool in part as “any person who does not act wisely, that is, does not follow the warnings and requirements of God, which are founded in His infinite wisdom. Hence ‘a fool’ is put for a wicked man, an enemy of God. So folly is put for wickedness and foolish lusts. Furthermore, foolish talking and foolish questions are

vain and empty, unprofitable conversation.”

The apostle Paul instructed Timothy to “avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife” (2 Timothy 2:23). In seeking peace, followers of Christ should be wise enough to avoid foolish engagements, which can lead to contention and strife.

In this situation, by answering the person’s silly argument or question, we would be descending to their level and



Resorting to heated arguments should be avoided.

Shutterstock

end up in a pointless quarrel. The person asking this type of question does not want to be taught. Instead, they are spiritually immature and just want to argue their point.

How we should answer

Verse 5 provides another perspective, stating, “Answer a fool according to his folly.” Again, we ask why? The answer? So that he may not be “wise in his own eyes.”

In this case there are times when a fool or foolishness needs to be challenged and exposed with wisdom. This is particularly true where there is hope of doing a person good, or, whenever what is being said is detrimental to other listeners and if unchallenged would leave a false impression and perhaps lead some astray.

The person may not appreciate being rebuked, but the truth should be declared to enlighten a fool and any other listeners so they may see the difference between wisdom and folly, and learn. In this case, we are effectively holding

a mirror to the person so they may see their own foolishness.

So we see that on some occasions we shouldn't answer and on others we should. In matters of insignificance, it's probably better to disregard a fool or foolishness. On the other hand, in more important areas, about God for example, there is a need to rebuke and instruct to expose folly and to deny credibility for the sake of others.

If we are unsure if a conversation or situation falls under verse 5, ask God for help. I mentioned earlier about being wise enough to know the difference – when to answer and when not to answer. Christ's half brother James advised, "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5). Sometimes this

involves a quick prayer.

The lesson we have learned is that there is a time not to answer and why, and a time to answer and why. These tools can also be used to handle non-biblical questions that might come our way.

It is up to us to determine the type of discussion we are having or the type of fool we are encountering. Whether we don't answer lest we become a fool, or we do answer so that they may not be wise in their own eyes.

There is no contradiction here but there is a vital lesson and by answering or not we can influence those around us. More importantly we must ensure that the count of fools never ever includes us.

Jason Godfrey

No doubt for a Christian

The Victorian period was a time of religious uncertainty. Charles Darwin's writings were challenging the traditional teachings of the Bible. One artist captured the sense of doubt and perplexity in a painting.

In 1855, the artist Henry Alexander Bowler exhibited an oil painting at the Royal Academy entitled, "The Doubt: 'Can These Dry Bones Live?'" The latter phrase is a quote from Ezekiel 37:3. The painting depicts a young woman standing in a churchyard. She leans on a tombstone inscribed, "Sacred to the memory of John Faithful. I am the Resurrection and the Life." These last words come from John 11:25.

She gazes at the exposed skull and bones, including the distal end of a femur. These were from a man who had died more than sixty years earlier. Based on the expres-

sion on her face the young woman appears to have some doubts as to the possibility of the resurrection. The painting's uncomfortable subject led to it remaining unsold.

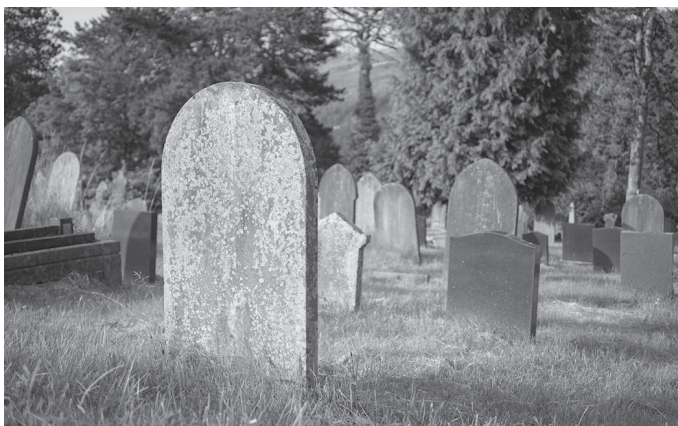
The pretty young Victorian lady's doubts should not be shared by true Christians. The painting also contains a healthy, very alive and growing chestnut tree. At the base of this tree is a slab inscribed Resurgam (I shall rise again!). This has been the hope and promise of true Christians throughout the ages (John 11:25; Luke 12:32). As we approach the end of our physical lives we will be able to echo the words of the apostle Paul when he looked towards his future in the Kingdom of God (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Henry Alexander Bowler had little success as a practising artist, mostly due to the amount of time spent on other duties as a teacher and art administrator. However, faithful practising Christians will have every success in God's Kingdom when they hear the words, "Well done good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things. I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matthew 25:21-23).

The painting can be viewed at www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/bowler-the-doubt-can-these-dry-bones-live-n03592.

To study the resurrection further please request or download our study aid *What Happens After Death?*

Philip Perry



Old gravestones can create doubt that God will indeed resurrect the dead. Yet God will keep His promise.

Shutterstock

Sealed pages of Scripture

From the beginning of human history, God interacted with certain prophets revealing a great divine purpose for human existence. Children of men were to become the children of God. How was this to unfold?

An enigmatic statement is found in the Psalms, where Asaph wrote, “I said, ‘You are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High’” (Psalm 82:6). A resurrection is alluded to in Psalm 71:20; 133:3 and Daniel 12:2-3, but how mortals could become immortal is not explained.

The designation “children” or “sons of God” rarely occurs in the Old Testament Scriptures and is sometimes a reference to God as Creator, for example in Job 1:6, 2:1 and 38:7 where angels are intended. (For an explanation of the account found in Genesis 6:1-4 please request our reprint article on this subject.)

God addressed the Israelites when coming out of Egypt as the “children of Israel.” Passing references are made to God having literal sons, as in Malachi 3:16-17 and Jeremiah 31:20, but Old Testament prophets weren’t always given full understanding of the complete spiritual process as revealed later by Christ in New Testament times. For them that knowledge was sealed.

A long-term process

The divine plan for human beings to become part of God’s extended family was envisioned “before the foundation of the world,” as Christ told His disciples in Matthew 25:34. Jesus also said, “No one can come to Me unless

*“I said, ‘You are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High’”
(Psalm 82:6).*

the Father who sent Me draws him” (John 6:44). God the Father is very much involved in what had been planned before creation. The blueprint of man’s destiny was to make possible for all human beings created in the image of God to become part of the divine Family (Genesis 1:26-27). That involved sending Christ.

God is selective in calling people to salvation at a time of His choosing. Thus, patience is often required if family members are not called all at once. The adage “God knows best” applies in this age of man when the vast majority remain uncalled. That doesn’t mean we cannot pray that God might open the minds of our siblings and other

family members.

It wasn’t us who initiated a relationship with God, but rather the Father who called us at a time deemed most beneficial in His sight. A time will come when this spirit of stupor, this veil shall be lifted: “And He will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all peoples and the veil that is spread over all nations” (Isaiah 25:7-9).

Not long after the creation of man God revealed Himself to Abraham, becoming the patriarch’s Mentor. Many years later God declared: “Abraham obeyed My voice, My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws” (Genesis 26:5). Abraham knew with whom he was dealing.

A covenant, a binding agreement, was established between God and Abraham through which the latter’s descendants (and ultimately all mankind) would be blessed. Both Israelites and non-Israelites would benefit from both the physical and spiritual realms, as we read in Genesis 12:1-3 and Genesis 35:11. Abraham accepted the terms of the covenant because there was no doubt in his mind that he was dealing with the Almighty.

Blessed in Christ

Disclosure in the New Testament made clear that Jesus Christ plays a pivotal part in the children of men being transformed into the children of God. He declared, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). That is achieved by His death which, if properly acknowledged through repentance, covers the death penalty each person incurs for his or her sins (Romans 6:23). We can then live a life of righteousness with the risen Christ living in us through God’s Holy Spirit. At Christ’s return to this planet, God’s promise to grant eternal life to His followers, both the living and the dead, will be fulfilled.

We must remember that all of us were once blinded spiritually, having been ignorant of true biblical beliefs and had been drawn to human traditions in our worship of God. To study this important topic further please request or download *The Gospel of the Kingdom and Saved by His Life*.

Gerhard Marx

It's inevitable: Poor decisions produce bad outcomes

If we believe that bad choices in our lives will bring us good results, either immediately or further down the line, we are deceiving ourselves.

Today, the Bible is often considered antiquated, outdated and irrelevant. This can lead to a rejection of God's law, thereby also discarding the very principles that would result in a successful life. These values are so fundamental that even non-believers could benefit from them.

If Christ's followers allow themselves to go down the same path, it will lead to death – eternal death from which there is no resurrection. That is Satan's purpose – the destruction of humankind – and he uses deceptive tactics to make us forget that our actions have consequences.

Reaping what we sow

When writing to scattered members of the early Church, the apostle Peter described Satan as a roaring lion “seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). However, having sought out and identified his prey, the devil can become much more subtle. He appeals to our weaknesses, he tempts us, gets us to doubt, gets us to compromise. One of his most effective methods is to persuade us to believe that poor choices don't have negative consequences.

This is what we see in society. Yet, people want the freedom to do as they desire, to choose any action that makes them happy, albeit briefly. And even when they make bad choices, they still want to reap a good harvest! We deceive ourselves if we believe that bad choices won't result in bad consequences. Why do we fall for this? Let's look at the tactics that Satan used against Adam and Eve.

How Satan works

God's instructions to Adam are recorded in Genesis 2:15-17. The phrase “surely die” uses the same Hebrew word repeated in different tenses. This grammatical construction intensifies the certainty of the action. The phrase can literally be translated as “dying you shall die.” God told Adam (and by extension, Eve) that in the day that they chose to disobey (action), it would set them on a course that would eventually lead to death (consequence).

In tempting Eve, Satan distorted the Eternal's instructions. First he misquoted God, in effect to say, “Did God say you can't eat from any tree in this entire garden?” Eve

corrected him saying, we can eat from any tree in the garden except one, and explained the reason. Satan followed up with the lie, “You will not surely die.”

That temptation was too great. Instant gratification in the form of being wise like God outweighed any concept

If we do something that we know is wrong but we aren't punished for it immediately, we tend to excuse it.

of consequence. Eve ate the fruit. She disobeyed, but there was no immediate punishment (Genesis 3:1-7). Death would come but it would be way off in the future.

Some consequences of poor choices occur immediately, others are delayed. The latter reinforces our proclivity for making more bad choices. If we do something that we know is wrong but we aren't punished for it immediately, we tend to excuse it. With this attitude we can be more willing to compromise again in the future. Without correction, punishment, or consequence, bad choices can multiply and escalate. For Christ's followers, this can be an added complication when trying to keep within the guidelines of God's holy law.

Hiding in plain sight

Satan has been attacking God's way since before God created humans. He's been perfecting his tactics for untold years. There are probably two ways in which people think of the devil. Either he has horns and a pitchfork and a red cape and you can see him from a mile away, or he doesn't really exist at all. Whichever view a person holds, Satan is rarely considered a threat. In reality, he's lurking in your blind spot, waiting to exploit your weaknesses and encourage you to make poor choices. For more information on his origin and tactics, please request our booklet *Is There Really a Devil?* For help in making wise choices, please request or download our booklets *The Ten Commandments* and *Making Life Work*.

Mark Mirigian



clear that deceased Christians remain in the grave until Christ returns. When we allow the Bible to interpret itself, Revelation 6:9 cannot mean that anyone is in heaven now. Rather, it is both a prophecy that martyrdom would occur and continue until Christ's second coming.

You can read more about how this section of Scripture fits into the overall framework of Bible prophecy in our booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* under the section about the fifth seal.

Q Why we do not observe new moons today, since Paul mentions new moons in Colossians 2:16? FAQ

A Marking the new moon in the Old Testament helped Israel keep track of the passing of months in a methodical way. It enabled them to always observe God's Holy Days at the correct time. Calendars were not readily available. This was also the case for the early New Testament Church of God. So the early Christians' purpose for marking the beginning of a month was the same as it was for Israel.

God nowhere instructed Israel to observe the new moons as part of worship in the way that He taught them to keep His Holy Days outlined in Leviticus 23. New moons were not "holy" time for the Israelites.

When the new moon occurs is still important to the Church of God, for we continue to keep His Holy Days. It isn't necessary, however, to mark the new moon with special meetings in order to keep track of when they appear. Finding out when the new moon falls is as easy as checking the local weather service.

Q What is the meaning of "the testimony of Jesus" in the book of Revelation? FAQ

A This phrase is mentioned four times in the book of Revelation. The context in which it is used makes the meaning plain. In Revelation 1:2, it refers back to the first verse, which says that God gave Jesus Christ this special message; and Christ in turn sent it to John by an angel. In other words, what we now have as the book of Revelation is "the testimony of Jesus." The ninth verse of the first chapter uses the phrase in the same way.

Revelation 12:17 says that the true Church has this testimony and keeps the commandments of God, meaning the same as Christ said in John 15:14, "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." The Church of God lives by Christ's instructions. God's commandments and Christ's instructions are one and the same.

The last reference is in Revelation 19:10, where the angel quickly restrains John from worshipping him. Instead, the angel said, "Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Some attempt to draw a different doctrine from this one verse. But, allowing the Bible to interpret itself, the testimony of Jesus is the words of Christ in general and the revelation of this book in particular. "Prophecy" can mean foretelling the future or it can mean inspired preaching. Both meanings fit here.

Q Who or what are the souls that John saw under the altar in Revelation 6:9-11? FAQ

A If we consider where verse 9 says these martyred Christians are – "under the altar" – and take this literally, it would mean that God crammed the many dead saints beneath His altar in heaven. Of course, that would be a ludicrous interpretation. Thus the language must be symbolic. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 makes it

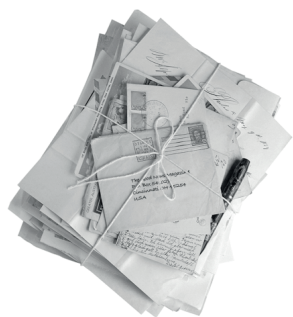
Let the Bible answer...

The Bible speaks of new heavens and earth.

The present heavens and earth will pass away: Psalm 102:25-26; Isaiah 51:6; Mark 13:31; Hebrews 1:10-11; 2 Peter 3:10-13.

God confirms He will create new heavens and a new earth: Isaiah 65:17-19; 66:22-23: 1 John 4:8, 16.

Aspects of the new earth and the New Jerusalem that comes down from heaven to earth are described in Revelation 21:1-2, 9-27 and 22:1-5.



Letters From Our Readers

Anniversary missed

An American relative of mine was totally caught out when I sent him an email saying congratulations on 250 years of American independence [*Beyond Today* July-September 2026]. I wonder how many people will be caught out by Christ's return.

Reader in Croydon

Rapture – true or false

What do you think about a pre-tribulation rapture? What does the Bible say about it? Does it exist?

Reader in Dunfermline

Editor's comment: We have sent you a copy of our study aid The Rapture vs. the Bible.

Free subscriptions renewed

I have been receiving *Beyond Today* for a very long time, so can you please still send it. For me it is a brilliant read. Please don't stop sending it. Thank you.

Reader in Sheffield

Yes, please continue sending my *Beyond Today* magazine. I really look forward to them. They are very interesting. Thank you.

Reader in Prescott

Providing ongoing knowledge and comfort

It's imperative that we keep our lights shining in these last days. May the Lord continue to bless your organisation.

Reader in Nottingham

Beyond Today is an edifying read. My walk of discipleship is enriched by it.

Reader in Plymouth

All your books have given me greater knowledge and are very interesting to read.

Reader in Arbroath

For years I have found great comfort in these editions of *Beyond Today*.

Reader in County Longford, Ireland

Thank you for your magazine and booklets. We all learn so much and live the word.

Reader in Devon

I praise God and appreciate you for the very rich messages in your literature.

Reader in Borehamwood

Seeking prayer

Editor's comment: Occasionally, we receive requests from readers for us to pray about challenging situations in their lives. Whilst we can and do pray for those requesting help, we always encourage individuals to establish their own deep relationship with God. To this end we recommend reading "The Privilege and Power of Prayer" chapter in our booklet Tools for Spiritual Growth.

Our literature can be downloaded from our website at www.ucg.org or requested from the address at the bottom of the front page.

How you can help

The outreach work of the United Church of God in the British Isles, including the production of this Supplement to *Beyond Today* magazine, is carried out by a small team of part-time employees, together with the efforts of unpaid volunteers.

Distribution of *Beyond Today* magazine, this Supplement and other literature of the United Church of God is funded by the generosity of Church members, co-workers and readers.

Jesus Christ instructed His disciples that as they had freely received they were to freely give (Matthew

10:8), so we supply our literature free of charge, making Christ's message available to all. Our gratitude goes to those who assist financially in this aspect of the Church's work.

Donations may be sent to *Beyond Today* or United Church of God, PO Box 705, Watford WD19 6FZ, United Kingdom; or online at www.ucg.org.uk/donate.html through PayPal. Donations can also be made directly to our bank account. Please contact us for details.

The United Church of God – British Isles is a registered charity in England and Wales, number 1079192.